

**2010 State of the City
City of Woodstock, GA
Donnie Henriques, Mayor
January 24, 2011**

As with previous years, 2010 proved to be extremely challenging for our nation, the State of Georgia and the City of Woodstock. We continued to deal with a struggling economy, a decline in our property tax base of almost 7% and an initial increase of our employee health insurance premiums of over 30%. While facing these and other challenges, I am pleased to be able to tell you that we not only survived another year, but we continue to make good progress towards accomplishing our collective goals.

General Administration

In January, 2010, Council Members Brewer, Mueller, Leonard and I were sworn in to office for new four year terms.

We also saw a long-time Council Member leave us and a new Council Member take his place. Steve Faris resigned due to his move to a nearby community after serving on the Council for over six years. Tessa Basford ran unopposed and joined us in September. I think that we have all been impressed with Tessa's commitment and how quickly she has adapted to serving on Council. Tessa, we are glad you are here with us.

We appointed a new Judge, Stephen Yaklin, and two Associate Judges. We also amended the City's Organizational Chart to move the judicial branch out from under the Police Department and to create it as an independent branch, responsible to the Mayor and Council. Council also unanimously voted to extend the City Manager's contract until December 31, 2013, thus insuring the stability of our management team.

The City's paperless agenda system was fully implemented; saving not only time and money, but also improving the public's access to information by now having our full agenda packets on-line for review. In addition, videos of Council meetings are now on-line for residents who can not make our meetings, to watch and keep up-to-date on happenings in Woodstock.

The following events/actions also were accomplished in 2010:

- The Woodstock Gas Lot on Mill Street was purchased to provide additional public parking in Downtown Woodstock.
- Awarded the bid for the renovations of the 1913 Sanctuary at Woodstock Community Church to Cablik Enterprises. Renovations are well underway and we will begin holding our Council meetings in downtown this summer.

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- Settled our lawsuit against Lexon Insurance Company to call the infrastructure bonds for the Cottages of Woodstock. The Public Works Department has completed many of the unfinished items left in the Cottages with the proceeds from this settlement.
- Mayor and Council unanimously passed a resolution requesting local legislation establishing term limits.
- Woodstock became a Sister City with Toledo City, Philippines.
- Partnered with Advanced Disposal for the "Cell Phones for Soldiers" Program.
- Our IT Department expanded the Voice Over IP (VOIP) telephone system to include almost all of the City's sites with the goal of being able to reduce costs across the board.
- Our HR Department is in the final stages of editing the revised personnel policies. They also sponsored a variety of training programs targeted to staffing needs to include a series of financial workshops for employees, a leadership/ethics course and offered blood born pathogens training. Up next will be mandatory anti-harassment training for employees.

Finance Department

The Finance Department completed a revenue bond transaction that gave us the funds to purchase the necessary ROW for the long awaited Ridgewalk Interchange.

A new purchasing policy was adopted and implemented that moved the City to a centralized purchasing system thus allowing us to coordinate and standardize our purchasing function. As part of this change, the City began utilizing GovDeals.com for the disposition of surplus property. The next stop will be to further reduce paperwork by moving to an electronic purchase requisition program, sometime in 2011.

Moody's reviewed and assigned a rating of A1 to the City, an improvement in our rating from the previous year. S&P assigned a rating of AA- to the City, the first time that agency has rated the City.

The Finance Department completed a \$20 million dollar bond issue to refinance the City's existing utility debt, provide for improvements at the Rubes Creek Water Reclamation Plant and to reimburse the General Fund for monies spent previously to pay for the Rubes Creek Plant in four years, which as everyone knows resulted in the General Fund reserves being depleted when growth slowed down and new tap fees did not generate sufficient revenues as projected by the City's former engineers to pay for the plant in that timeframe.

In the coming weeks, we will be reviewing the FY 2010 audit with you. In the audit, which covers the fiscal year that ended the month prior to the repayment of the money to the General Fund, you will see exactly what toll that decision took on the City's General Fund.

I am pleased to report to you tonight, that the bond issue that closed in July corrects the mistake that was made over six years ago and has set us back on a firm financial footing.

Community Development Department

The Sustainable Woodstock Program was created, which helped the City achieve the "Green Community" Bronze Certification from the Atlanta Regional Commission. The City was also awarded a \$220,000 grant to implement energy savings programs, including installing solar panels on our future meeting hall in Downtown Woodstock.

The City saw its first Bronze Level LEED certified building completed this year. Dr. Michael Pratt, Woodstock ENT, should be commended for his efforts in going the extra mile to do his part in making our community more sustainable.

Purchased and implemented the EnerGov Solutions development software package, which allow for better tracking of development and building projects within the City. A further step to improve efficiencies was the creation of the Development Services Division, which centralizes all permitting activities and cross-trains staff for better efficiency. This was accomplished without adding any new staff.

Duane Helton was named the Building Official for the City and Jeremy Parker was promoted to Deputy Building Official in 2010.

A partnership was established with Cherokee County for the development of the Elm Street Cultural Arts Village in Downtown Woodstock. The next step of this project is fundraising for the renovation of the Reeves house.

A draft was finalized for the Ridgewalk Master Plan to guide quality "smart growth" development of the new interchange, for which we hosted a groundbreaking in late October. We will work with Cousins Properties and Horizons Growth Properties to refine the plan in 2011.

Construction was begun on the LCI Streetscapes Project in Downtown Woodstock. This project had languished for years at the state level. While the pace of construction has not been as fast as we had hoped, and we recognize the impact that it has had on Downtown business and residents, we believe that the improved pedestrian access and the new face it will put on Downtown Woodstock will be well worth the pain in the long run.

On the economic front, we saw a number of positive developments in 2010.

- Woodstock West, in Downtown, we re-assembled by Walton Communities who plan to begin construction on their project this year, to include parts of the grid network of streets.

- New builders have entered the market to complete unfinished projects; including John Wieland in Woodstock Downtown, Ashton Woods at Woodstock Knoll, and Windsong Properties at Green Street, formerly Woodstock Heights. We also saw KB Homes re-enter the Georgia market at their Wynchase Development, and saw new construction for the first time in several years at Cottages of Woodstock, Oakhurst and Cornerstone.
- North/South Development broke ground on the first building that is being developed under the senior living zoning category, Heritage at Madison Pointe.
- Pinnacle Orthopedic completed a 30,000 square foot (?) medical office building on Towne Lake Parkway, responsible for 120 jobs.

Finally, the City submitted a proposal to become the new home of the Georgia Music Hall of Fame, for which we are now one of four cities left in the running for this project. When given the opportunity, we felt that we could not pass up the chance to bring over 50,000 visitors a year to Woodstock and Cherokee County to support our local businesses. If this project is awarded to Woodstock, it will become the main cog in the downtown initiative of The Arts becoming a visitor destination.

Economic Development Services/DDA/Main Street Program

In 2010, the Economic Development Services Department focused on three areas:

- Stabilizing the Downtown Woodstock area.
- Implementing a system for tracking economic development projects.
- Recruiting new businesses and industry into the City through client-oriented recruitment packages.

Some of the accomplishments by the Economic Development Services Department, the DDA and the Main Street Program in 2010 were as follows:

- 12 new businesses opened in the Downtown area.
- Recruited 250 new jobs to the City, including 120 jobs from the Glassbaker project.
- Assisted in obtaining almost \$500,000 in loans for a new business from the State's Downtown Revolving Loan Fund and the Georgia Cities Foundation.
- Hosted the Second Annual Woodstock Arts and Wine Festival.
- Awarded two \$5,000 facade grants for Downtown buildings.
- Grand opening of two new restaurants in Downtown: J. Christopher's and Cotton Mill Deli.
- Created the new Downtown Dollars Gift Certificate Program.
- Created the new web site focused on Downtown: www.mainstreetwoodstock.org

- Successfully leased the parking lot of the Woodstock United Methodist Church for ten years to add public parking Downtown.
- The City participated in the Hometown Focus Marketing Campaign with 11 Alive in December.
- DDA Boundaries were modified to include Ridgewalk Parkway.

The City also leased the main sanctuary at the Woodstock Community Church to the Towne Lake Arts Center; now known as the Elm Street Players. ESP will hold all of the productions and classes in Downtown, furthering our Downtown Economic Development Strategy of building upon the arts.

Fire Department

The Woodstock Fire Department responded to over 3,300 calls for service in 2010. They also trained City employees in CPR and First Aid. The Department renewed their license for Emergency Medical Service (E.M.S.) and instituted an EMS Advisory Board with Dr. Jill Mabley, a proud Woodstock resident of Ward 1 serving as the advisor.

The City and Fire Department also signed a Mutual Aid Agreement with the City of Mountain Park, to go along with the agreement already in place with Cobb County and the Mutual Response Agreement with Cherokee County.

The Fire Department launched its efforts in the world of social media by launching Nixle and Twitter accounts to keep residents informed of day to day activities and emergencies. The City also purchased a new four-wheeler and a rescue stretcher to allow the Fire Department to respond to emergencies on the Greenprints Trail System.

On a personal note, Chief Dave Soumas has continued to lead his team, improving every day, despite personal hardships that would cripple most people. It has been heart-warming to see the community rally to support the needs of his beautiful grandson, Gabriel.

Parks and Recreation

The City completed an agreement with SORBA and saw over six miles of the Taylor Randahl Mountain Bike Trail constructed, along with a trailhead at Rope Mill Park. The dedication ceremony was held in May and since then, the ridership numbers have gone through the roof SORBA also held its ☞ Annual Woodstock Biking Festival in October at the Taylor Randahl Memorial Trail. On the personal side, the Randahl family has been kept up to date on the use of the trail system, and wish to pass on to you how blown away they are by the continued support this trail system has received. With a sad note, I am reporting to you the passing of Taylor's Grandfather over this past weekend. I have extended to them the City's condolences, and will keep them up to date.

What's next for the Greenprints Trail System? The construction of the pedestrian bridge over the Little River which began in 2010 and the finalization of the 7+ miles of multi-use trail that will be constructed as part of our partnership with Cherokee County and the parks bond. This includes the piece that parallels Towne Lake Parkway, that I believe will be the most heavily used section in the entire program.

The City signed a partnership agreement with Gas South which offers residents of Woodstock a reduced natural gas rate and provides funding for the City which we have earmarked for the trail system.

Other Parks and Recreation accomplishments in 2010 include the following:

- Successful completion of the 13th Annual Woodstock Concert Series, sponsored by Northside Hospital Cherokee.
- Securing a sponsor to fund the 4th of July Freedom Festival (including fireworks) and the Christmas Parade. We would like to thank LGE Community Credit Union for coming on board as the sponsor for these events in 2010.
- City Park became a Wi-Fi Hot Spot.
- The park at the Woodlands opened and we partnered with the Cherokee Outdoor YMCA to offer a soccer league.
- Bathrooms, a new pavilion and a new playground were constructed at Dupree Park. The "Pirates' Heart", named by a WES 4th grader, has proven to be a huge hit.
- The 1st Annual Woodstock Music Festival was held in City Park in October.
- The 1st Annual Ghost Tales and Trails was held in Downtown at City Park - sponsored by the Greenprints Alliance and Elm Street Cultural Arts Village.
- The first ever Community Garden was opened to the public in the Spring of 2010 and was a huge success.
- The Department began pursuing national accreditation through NRPA.
- The 1st Annual Black History Month celebration was held in February. I need to give a special thanks to Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Member Genevieve Georges for Chairing the event.

And what's next for Parks and Recreation: Old city hall was demolished for the expansion of City Park. Council awarded the design contract for the amphitheatre on the site of the old city hall to the firm of Clark Patterson and Lee.

Police Department

The Woodstock Police Department initiated a comprehensive community notification program involving Twitter, Facebook, Nixle and Nation of Neighbors - enrolling over 2600 citizens in the various programs.

PD also initiated a Reserve Officer Program and will see our first applicants enroll in the

Reinhardt University Police Academy to become certified officers in January.

Officers were assigned to designated City subdivisions to provide direct assistance to residents concerning quality of life issues. Officers also went from 8-hour shifts to 12-hours shifts with the goal of reducing overtime. An employee assistance program was also implemented to provide professional counseling to officers in need.

The Woodstock Police Department Foundation, a 501(c) (3) organization was founded and the initial board of directors was appointed.

The Police Department drafted the City's Critical Response Plan, which was adopted by Council.

Finally, the Department held its 1st annual Charity Bike Ride for Kids, to raise money for the annual Shop with a Cop Program.

Public Works

The City's first roundabout was constructed at Haney Road. This public/private partnership with Toll Brothers was chosen as opposed to adding another red light on Hwy 5. It has also had the effect of creating a nice gateway into downtown coming from the north.

The Pine Hill Force Main project was completed with the construction of the last section through Woodstock Downtown, which saw an old, undersized and spill prone line from Hwy 92 along Noonday Creek replaced and upsized.

The RR Pedestrian Crossing was completed and named in honor of Herbert Priest, a longtime Downtown Woodstock business owner.

The Department also implemented an Adopt-a-Road Program.

Upgrades were designed for the Rubes Creek Water Reclamation Plant and construction will begin in 2011. This project will also correct sins of the past when a key component of the plant was value engineered out of the initial construction.

A new Stormwater Building was constructed at our Public Works facility that will allow us to store and house equipment inside, better protecting it from the elements and extending the life of the equipment.

Let me take a moment to say something about our Public Works employees. We are proud of all of our employees. We are proud of the Police Officers and Firefighters who risk their own lives when called upon to protect all of us. But I want to thank our Public

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Works employees, to include the Parks and Recreation maintenance staff, who often get overlooked. When the weather is bad, whether it be floods, tornadoes, snow or ice, these are the employees who are out in the weather dealing with the disasters while we are at our homes nice and safe and warm. While we slept in our beds at our homes during the recent snow event, these were the men and women that were salting the roads, pulling cars from ditches and making sure that the Fire and Police Department's could respond to calls. And when then did get to take a nap for a few hours, it was on a cot in the Public Works Building. Sure they get paid for doing this job - but I can assure you that it is not nearly enough. Thank you all for your dedication and service, which I want to recognize tonight.

The Future

This year will be just as challenging as the past 3 years have been. Experts are predicting a slow recovery of our economic system....I hope they aren't right....for a change. While Woodstock has faired better than most of our surrounding communities, everyone will agree that things are a long way from normal. Or, is this the NEW normal? Time will tell. All I know is the citizens of Woodstock demand and deserve to be led into the 21st century, not by sitting on our hands, hoping and praying that "things will get better". But, by leading by example: Here are my top ten wish list projects, becoming reality:

10. The LCI Project becomes past tense.
9. The interchange is well underway.
8. Council meetings back in Downtown, the heart of our City.
7. An improved City Park, along with a first class concert facility.
6. More new businesses, driving more visitors Downtown, with increased parking and a more pedestrian friendly environment.
5. A balanced budget that continues to meet the needs of the people and also allows for a growing emergency fund.
4. The City's first dog park, along with many more miles of trails bringing the Greenprints Program into better focus.
3. The beginning of commercial development in Ridgewalk.
2. Work begins on the expansion of Towne Lake/Arnold Mill - left turn lane at Main Street.
1. The welcoming of the Georgia Music Hall of Fame to its new home - Woodstock.

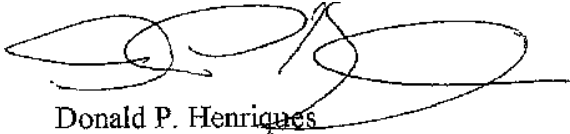
Closing

One of the problems that I have every year when writing this address is how do you segregate out to an individual department the credit for a specific accomplishment when most times it is more than one department working together to achieve the accomplishment. The other problem is that something always gets left out, for which I want to go ahead and apologize if your favorite project or accomplishment was not

mentioned. I could go on all night, but I won't. I remember when we interviewed Jeff for the City Manager's position in 2008; he described his management style as that of a team approach. In writing this address, I think I can see what he was talking about. It really doesn't matter if Public Works gets credit for an accomplishment versus the Community Development Department, just as it doesn't matter if Drew Brees or Reggie Bush gets credit for my beloved Saints winning the Super Bowl, after 43 years of waiting. What matters is that we won.

I believe that you can tell from all that we've accomplished in 2010, given all of the economic challenges that we faced, it took a team to win the game. No one department - no one employee - and no one elected official. Without all of us working together as a team, we would not have survived the challenges we faced in 2010, much less accomplish what we were able to accomplish. I am sure that 2011 will also have its challenges also, but I have faith and confidence that we can accomplish even more with the team that we have in place.

Thank you all very much for listening.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donald P. Henriques', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Donald P. Henriques

Mayor

January 24, 2011

